

### Likely Syrian Patterns of Behavior

Syrian behavior is likely to be driven by several key impulses which transcend specific issues:

- A desire for leadership within the Arab world. With Egypt's departure from the ranks of the confrontation states, Syria now has considerable opportunity to play the role of upholder of Arabism, the Palestinian cause, and guardian of the front against Israel. This kind of leadership role in the Arab world is not achieved through settlement with Israel. Only if Syria could make major gains for the Arab and Palestinian cause through negotiation with Israel would it consider coming to terms in a broader peace process: return of the Golan, groundwork for some kind of Palestinian state, Arab recognition that Syria had essentially stymied further expansion of Israeli power at Arab expense in the region, i.e., a Syrian imprint on the future shape of the Middle East.
- Syria's primary opportunity for leadership of the Arab cause lies among the radical, hard-line states, maintaining the image of steadfastness, strength, and devotion to a principled cause which is so important to maintaining the legitimacy of Alawite role in Syria. Syria is unlikely to be attracted to the route of accommodation and negotiation -- in which Syria would be number three or four in line to reach agreement with Israel. Syria cannot aspire to leadership of the Arab moderates.
- Maintenance of military power. Syrian military power can derive only from the USSR -- the only state which can meet Syria's military ambitions to move towards parity with Israel. Syria thus will need to cooperate closely with the USSR over the long range. Even if peace with Israel should be attained, Syria will still seek a powerful military machine in order to dominate its neighbors and will seek the diplomatic backing of a superpower which only Moscow can provide.
- A major voice in the PLO. The PLO is an instrument of power which Syria wishes to wield in its own interests -- both against Israel and against other Arab rivals. It is an important asset to bring to bear in any peace process to ensure that Syrian interests are taken into account. Syria will struggle to maintain maximum control of the PLO.
- Maintenance of economic support. Syria requires major economic assistance to maintain its domestic and foreign policies; this aid comes primarily from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. Ironically, these states contribute to Syria primarily for defensive reasons: to be seen upholding the Arab frontline against Israel; and to ensure that Syria does not turn its radical forces against their own monarchical systems. These states can exert only minimum influence upon Syria in return. In fact, Syria can best ensure that flow of gold if it maintains the "Arab cause" in a confrontation posture,

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perhaps punctuated by real skirmishes with Israel. Lastly, Syria's conservative Arab neighbors are well aware that it possesses a credible military and subversive potential with which to threaten them if they are ungenerous in support of "the Arab cause."

In sum, I believe the cards are stacked heavily in favor of Syria's maintaining a hard-line posture against Israel and any concessions to it.

Golan is a piece of territory Assad would like very much to recover, but it does not rank in importance with the other aims mentioned above. Syria will not sacrifice these other interests in return for the Golan.

In the logic of these circumstances, there is probably little the US can do to meet Syria's real needs.

Nonetheless the US could probably maintain a positive action towards Assad which might dampen Syria's tendency towards spoiling US initiatives:

- Maintain a regular, serious and high-level discourse with Assad. Assad thrives on such recognition which demonstrates Syria's critical role in the region. He is responsive to meetings with US Presidents and Secretaries of State. Under the proper circumstances I believe it is possible to keep Assad involved and talking, partially gratified through this kind of exchange. To date Syria has largely been ignored as intractable. Ignoring Assad can only increase his intractability. If Assad feels he is part of a larger dialogue and process, it might cause him to keep more options open than otherwise and -- under certain circumstances -- could predispose him to come to certain tactical settlements. (Although this formulation is vague, it is one of the few avenues we have to reaching Assad and keeping him from firm and unswerving pursuit of policies we hope to sidetrack.)

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Probably not even Assad yet knows how far he will go in rejecting withdrawal. He will likely play the situation by ear, judging the pros and cons as the situation evolves.

The possibility of limited conflict with Israel is unlikely to deter Assad, although he probably does not actively seek war as a goal. Assad certainly wishes to avoid a major conflict which could destroy his war-making potential for a long time to come.

In sum I suspect that Syria will find more advantage in remaining in Lebanon -- even at the risk of possible war with Israel -- than in withdrawal.

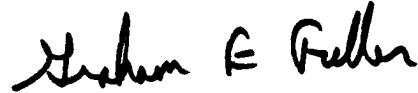
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If a war does take place, Assad will seek to inflict as major damage on Israeli troops and aircraft in Lebanon in order to demonstrate that Syria can perform with increasing credibility as a danger to Israel. We certainly cannot rule out use of the surface-to-surface SCUD missiles against Israel if Syria's main military forces are seriously threatened. Assad will also be anxious to demonstrate the effectiveness of the new equipment received from the USSR, particularly in the air defense field. Once these goals have been attained, Assad will seek outside intervention to terminate the fighting as soon as possible -- before Syria's military is destroyed.



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